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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 7992
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iran

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying on

Sunday that Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia will be invited to the Washington meeting on the Middle East, which will address the core issues -- borders, Jerusalem, and refugees. Israel Radio reported that on Sunday the international Quartet "expressed concern over conditions in Gaza. It agreed on the importance of continued emergency and humanitarian assistance without obstruction." The Quartet "further noted its grave concern over the continued rocket fire from Gaza into Israel."

As Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will speak this week to the UN General Assembly and at a Columbia University forum, The Jerusalem Post bannered "[FM Tzipi] Livni to Be Both Diplomat and Demonstrator at UN." (Jewish groups are expected to protest Ahmadinejad's visit.) Major media quoted John Coatsworth, a dean at Columbia, as saying over the weekend in an interview with FOX News that he would have let Hitler speak. Leading media quoted Livni as saying: "The world does not understand that Iran will blow up in its face." The Jerusalem Post reported that on Sunday Yad Vashem condemned Ahmadinejad's visit to Columbia. Leading media quoted Iran's President as saying in an interview with CBS's "60 Minutes," recorded last Thursday, that his country does not need nuclear weapons and that Tehran is not looking for war with the US. Ha'aretz, Yediot, and Israel Radio quoted Newsweek as saying that Vice President Dick Cheney considered asking Israel to bomb the nuclear reactor at Natanz, which would have led to an Iranian response against Israel, thus providing an excuse for the US to attack Iran. Yediot quoted the British weekly The Sunday Times as saying that Israel has set up a secret team, led by Dr. Lani Kass (phon.), to prepare for wars in cyberspace. Kass is now training the US army. Yediot quoted the German weekly Der Spiegel as saying that in response to suspicions that German firms are sending technology to Iran, German FM Frank-Walter Steinmeier accused the US and France of continuing to do business with Iran. On Sunday Yediot reported that Tehran revealed a new ballistic missile, an improved model of the Shihab 3. This model, which has a longer range, is capable of striking anywhere inside Israeli territory as well as US military targets in the Middle East.

All media reported that on Sunday the cabinet approved the release of 91 Palestinian prisoners ahead of the Muslim holiday of Id el Fitr, while a senior GOI source said that Egypt continues to negotiate with Hamas for the release of kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit. The cabinet passed the early release by a vote of 16 to 6. Opposed were Shaul Mofaz (Kadima), Yitzhak Aharonovitch (Yisrael Beiteinu), and the four Shas ministers. Yisrael Beiteinu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman was absent. The prisoners to be released are members of Fatah, the PFLP, and the DFLP who do not have "blood on their hands." The original list included 100 names, but nine were removed because they did not meet the criteria. Ofer Dekel, PM Ehud Olmert's special coordinator for missing soldiers, visited Cairo again last week. Ha'aretz quoted a senior GOI source as saying that the intensity of the Egypt-Hamas discussions has slightly decreased in recent months.

All media reported that on Sunday Defense Minister Ehud Barak warned Israelis that they must be prepared for the next war "as if it is just around the corner." Barak added that Israel "should not be deceived by the illusion of a bogus calm." He was speaking at a ceremony commemorating the fallen of the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Ha'aretz (and Yediot on Sunday) reported that Defense Minister Ehud Barak has agreed to the deployment of 500 armed Palestinian police officers on the streets of Nablus, to enforce law and order in the West Bank's largest city. Ha'aretz quoted Defense Ministry officials as saying that the officers would be deployed within two weeks and will only be permitted to operate during daylight hours. Barak's decision followed a request made by Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad in a recent meeting with Barak. The matter was also discussed at Barak's meeting last week with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Ha'aretz quoted one source in Barak's office as saying that if the Nablus model is successful, it could be extended to other West Bank cities. Ha'aretz quoted Palestinian security sources as saying that Palestinian police are already active in the city.

On Sunday The Jerusalem Post reported that French FM Bernard Kouchner told the daily that the West should not be talking to Hamas at present. Ha'aretz reported that FM Livni plans to launch a

diplomatic campaign to convince the world that terrorist

organizations should no longer be allowed to field candidates in elections.

Maariv reported that four key cabinet ministers -- Ehud Barak, Daniel Friedmann, Avigdor Lieberman, and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer -- are opposed to setting up a commission to check the damage caused to Palestinian civilians by the July 2002 bombardment of a Gaza building that killed Hamas leader Salah Shehadeh and 14 innocent civilians. Maariv reported that PM Olmert has expressed similar reservations.

Over the weekend all media reported that Daniel Sharon, a 32-year-old dual citizen of Israel and Germany who resides in Nahariya, has been arrested in Lebanon on charges of espionage. Sharon, a convert to Islam, has visited Lebanon 11 times over the past two years with a German passport and made numerous visits to other Arab countries. Lebanese media reported that he is a homosexual who enjoyed making new acquaintances in Arab countries. Leading media reported that Israel is letting the German government handle the affair. Israel Radio reported that Lebanon is likely to deport Sharon.

Ha'aretz reported that the Jewish National Fund (JNF) is expected to tell the High Court of Justice Monday that it will agree to market its lands to non-Jews in the near future, although it has long insisted that JNF lands should be used only for housing Jews. The JNF will be compensated for land sold to Arabs by receiving an equivalent amount of land from the state. This "tactical retreat" reportedly stems from the JNF's concern that the High Court will issue a precedent-setting ruling in the petition now before it.

The Jerusalem Post quoted PA officials as saying on Sunday that several Fatah officials who fled to the West Bank after Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip last June have decided to return home. The officials were quoted as saying that the decision came after the Fatah officials received assurances from Hamas that they would not be harmed.

Yediot reported that on Sunday Ahmed Yousef, a political advisor to Palestinian PM Ismail Haniyeh (Hamas), told the newspaper that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas will return from the US empty-handed and that there will be no political solution without Hamas's participation.

Leading media quoted the British weekly The Sunday Times as saying that a few weeks ago Israeli commandos collected nuclear samples in Syria. Israel Radio cited denial of the report by Syria's Information Minister.

Ha'aretz quoted Jordanian King Abdullah II as saying on Sunday that Jordan will allocate 1.113 million Jordanian Dinars (USD 1.5 million) to the Jordan Hashemite Fund for the Reconstruction of Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock.

On Sunday Maariv reported that the Saudi air force will soon receive 72 Typhoon (Eurofighter) combat planes. This is a sophisticated western airplane, equivalent in capability to one of the advanced F-26 models.

Leading media reported that a long list of prominent intellectuals recently signed a petition calling for PM Olmert to negotiate with Hamas. The signatories of the petition -- which was organized by the sponsors of the Geneva Initiative -- include the authors Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, Meir Shalev, Judith Katzir, Eli Amir, Savyon Liebrecht, Yehoshua Sobol, and Dorit Rabinyan.

11. Mideast:

Summary:

Dov Weisglass, top diplomatic adviser to former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot:
"The tendency to make light of the strength of the current US

administration, which is towards the end of its term, is an error.... The current president is a true friend, who is well aware of the threats and the means of removing them. Israel must not miss the remainder of his term."

Former IDF chief of staff Moshe Ya'alón wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "If the states of the free world are determined, jihadist Islam will be defeated even without the degree of bloodshed of World War II."

Block Quotes:

I. "Window of Opportunity"

Dov Weisglass, top diplomatic adviser to former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (9/24): "A ... weighty consideration for supporting accelerating the [diplomatic] process, is the position of the United States. The US administration aspires towards, and is urging, progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track. Israel must be attentive to the desires of the current administration, not only because of its strong friendship, but because of its understanding of the fundamental threats to Israel's existence, which have recently increased. At the end of the day, the Israeli-Palestinian problem is difficult and painful, but it does not hold the danger of destruction for Israel. Iran and its agents to the north are the existential danger. An arrangement in the Palestinian arena, which would be led by the Americans and supported by a majority of the Arab world, will give the US the required political capital, in the region and in the world, to increase pressure on Iran. The tendency to make light of the strength of the current US administration, which is towards the end of its term, is an error; the system of government there is far different from our own.... A president in his last year of office is not similar to a president in the first year of his term, but he still has considerable ability to act. The current president is a true friend, who is well aware of the threats and the means of removing them. Israel must not miss the remainder of his term."

II. "We Must Confront"

Former IDF chief of staff Moshe Ya'alón wrote in Yediot Aharonot (9/23): "The wave of jihadist Islam did not start in September 2001 with the attack on the United States. The Iranian revolution in 1979 is an historical turning point in which fundamentalist Islam began to gather strength and self-confidence.... President Bush's decision to move from the defensive to pre-emptive attack changed the situation. The overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the attack on al-Qaida leaders turned the organization's leaders into the hunted ones, making it difficult for them to perpetrate large terror attacks.... During the days preceding World War II, there were also elements in the West who chose not to confront Nazi ideology and were even ready to make concessions to it in order to gain quiet in the short term. The adherents of jihadist Islamist ideology do not have nearly the same power as Nazi Germany did, and their power cannot be compared with that of the states of the free world. Therefore, if the states of the free world are determined, jihadist Islam will be defeated even without the degree of bloodshed of World War II."

2. Iran:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "It is unfortunate that the US and other signatory countries have not fulfilled their responsibilities to enforce the Genocide Convention.... If they had ... perhaps the international sanctions campaign to force Iran to back down would have been more successful by now."

Moderate Orthodox contributor Bambi Sheleg wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "The representative of the oppressed on Earth, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, will ... explain to his American audience why it is moral to destroy the state of the Jews."

Block Quotes:

I. "Columbia's 'Realpolitik'"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (9/24): "In addition to anger, it is hard not to react with sadness to one of America's great universities succumbing to the utter distortion of the hallowed value of free speech.... It should not be necessary to enumerate here the crimes of the Iranian regime -- from supporting terrorism, to killing American soldiers, to denying the Holocaust, to opposing peace with Israel, and seeking our destruction. By inviting a leader who embodies these crimes, Columbia is saying that it does not regard them as seriously as it does other international miscreants to which it would not dream of granting such a platform.... Columbia is not standing up for free speech, but for realpolitik in its crassest form: Might takes right. Or in this case, terror makes right.... It is unfortunate that the US and other signatory countries have not fulfilled their responsibilities to enforce the Genocide Convention, which is explicitly designed to prevent genocide, by making incitement to genocide a punishable crime. Such procedures should have been initiated against Ahmadinejad years ago. If they had, perhaps Columbia would have thought differently about extending its invitation, and perhaps the international sanctions campaign to force Iran to back down would have been more successful by now."

II. "Anti-Israel Provocation"

Moderate Orthodox contributor Bambi Sheleg wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (9/24): "In many places in the Western world we witness a strange alliance between ultra-liberals and ultra-fundamentalists. Both sides, which used to look as absolute opposites, have many contact points, among which hatred for Israel and a form of kowtowing to forces of Islamic zealots, which appear 'authentic' and 'oppressed.' The representative of the oppressed on Earth, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, will visit Columbia University and explain to his American audience why it is moral to destroy the state of the Jews.... The only question is why it is mainly Jewish organizations that oppose this heinous visit. I am afraid to guess the answer to that question."

JONES